

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Lamont Deas,)	C/A No.: 1:23-2694-HMH-SVH
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
vs.)	
)	ORDER AND NOTICE
Georgetown Detention Center,)	
)	
Defendant.)	
)	

Lamont Deas (“Plaintiff”), proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, sues Georgetown Detention Center (“Defendant”). Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B) and Local Civ. Rule 73.02(B)(2)(d) (D.S.C.), the undersigned is authorized to review such complaints for relief and submit findings and recommendations to the district judge.

I. Factual and Procedural Background

Plaintiff sues Defendant alleging in March and April 2023, he was placed in a cell with black mold for 21 hours a day causing him headaches and stomach pains. [ECF No. 1 at 4–5]. Plaintiff alleges he was provided ibuprofen, but it did not cure his headaches, and he still feels sick despite being held in another facility. *Id.* at 6. Plaintiff seeks \$200,000 in damages. *Id.*

II. Discussion

A. Standard of Review

Plaintiff filed his complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, which permits an indigent litigant to commence an action in federal court without prepaying the administrative costs of proceeding with the lawsuit. To protect against possible abuses of this privilege, the statute allows a district court to dismiss a case upon a finding that the action fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted or is frivolous or malicious. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i), (ii). A finding of frivolity can be made where the complaint lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992). A claim based on a meritless legal theory may be dismissed sua sponte under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). *See Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 327 (1989).

Pro se complaints are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys. *Gordon v. Leeke*, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978). A federal court is charged with liberally construing a complaint filed by a pro se litigant to allow the development of a potentially meritorious case. *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007). In evaluating a pro se complaint, the plaintiff's allegations are assumed to be true. *Fine v. City of N.Y.*, 529 F.2d 70, 74 (2d Cir. 1975). The mandated liberal construction afforded to pro se pleadings means that if the court can reasonably read the pleadings to state a valid claim on which the plaintiff could prevail, it should do so. Nevertheless, the

requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts that set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Dep't of Soc. Servs.*, 901 F.2d 387, 390–91 (4th Cir. 1990).

B. Analysis

To state a plausible claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983,¹ an aggrieved party must sufficiently allege that he was injured by “the deprivation of any [of his or her] rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the [United States] Constitution and laws” by a “person” acting “under color of state law.” *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1983; *see generally* 5 Charles Alan Wright & Arthur R. Miller, *Federal Practice and Procedure* § 1230 (3d ed. 2014). Only “persons” may act under color of state law; therefore, a defendant in a § 1983 action must qualify as a “person.”

Plaintiff has not stated a valid § 1983 claim against Defendant, as it does not qualify as a “person.” A sheriff’s department, detention center, or task force is a group of officers or buildings that is not considered a legal entity subject to

¹ Plaintiff’s complaint is before this court pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Section 1983 is the procedural mechanism through which Congress provided a private civil cause of action based on allegations of federal constitutional violations by persons acting under color of state law. The purpose of § 1983 is to deter state actors from using badge of their authority to deprive individuals of their *federally-guaranteed* rights and to provide relief to victims if such deterrence fails.

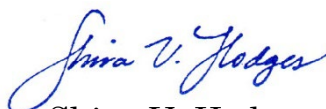
suit. *See Harden v. Green*, 27 Fed. App'x 173, 178 (4th Cir. 2001) (finding that the medical department of a prison is not a person pursuant to § 1983); *see also Post v. City of Fort Lauderdale*, 750 F. Supp. 1131 (S.D. Fla. 1990) (dismissing city police department as improper defendant in § 1983 action because not “person” under the statute); *Shelby v. City of Atlanta*, 578 F. Supp. 1368, 1370 (N.D. Ga. 1984) (dismissing police department as party defendant because it was merely a vehicle through which city government fulfills policing functions). Therefore, Defendant is subject to summary dismissal.

NOTICE CONCERNING AMENDMENT

Plaintiff may attempt to correct the defects in his complaint by filing an amended complaint by **August 1, 2023**, along with any appropriate service documents. Plaintiff is reminded that an amended complaint replaces the original complaint and should be complete in itself. *See Young v. City of Mount Ranier*, 238 F.3d 567, 572 (4th Cir. 2001) (“As a general rule, an amended pleading ordinarily supersedes the original and renders it of no legal effect.”) (citation and internal quotation marks omitted). If Plaintiff files an amended complaint, the undersigned will conduct screening of the amended complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. If Plaintiff fails to file an amended complaint or fails to cure the deficiencies identified above, the undersigned will recommend to the district court that the claims be dismissed without leave for further amendment.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

July 11, 2023
Columbia, South Carolina



Shiva V. Hodges
United States Magistrate Judge